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A COMPARISON OF THE SYNOPTIC, PAULINE, AND JOHANNINE CONCEPTIONS OF JESUS

FREDERIC PALMER
Harvard University

We often have a tendency, in the complex life of the present, to regret the apparently simpler life of the past; to long for the care-free irresponsibility of childhood, or for the unconventional habits of an earlier society, or for the glow and enthusiasm of our former Christian faith. The attempt at recall is of course always futile, and the picture of past conditions as we reconstruct it is almost always erroneous. The Golden Age is not behind but before. Similarly there is a tendency in the student of the life of Christ to regret the days when there was one authoritative portrait of Jesus, and when a harmony of the Gospels, arranging all, or nearly all, their incidents into a consistent whole, seemed entirely possible. But those days are, for the student of the New Testament, irrevocably gone. Here, as elsewhere, he will, if he is wise, recognize present conditions as steps in development and, with hopeful confidence, labor to discover the wealthier knowledge to which they lead.

That the New Testament contains not one portrait of Jesus but several, and that these differ from one another in important respects, this is the starting-point of our problem, which is to describe the three different views—for they all belong to three main types—and to consider the relation of these to one another. In doing so I shall take the Gospels and Epistles, in the main, as they stand, without attempting textual criticism, and shall use for convenience the names appended to them as those of the authors, without questioning their historicity.

In the Synoptic Gospels we find the first conception of Jesus, the first in time and therefore the first in christological development. It can be seen most characteristically in the Gospel of Mark. It is comparatively simple of thought, not analytic, not

theologic. There is an atmosphere about it which is fresh, glad, young. We can see the blue lake sparkling in the morning sunshine, and the golden fields of Galilee, rich with lilies and vocal with birds. It is concerned with facts ungarnished, unrelated to any scheme of thought. The utterances of Jesus in it are significant and profound, but there is in them no touch of mystery; they say little about his nature or his relation to man or God. The bond between the disciples and their Master is one of personal devotion, in part an almost childish dependence, and in part the reverent loyalty of a religious enthusiast for his prophet. They turn to him for the solution of their practical questions: how to get a withheld inheritance or a desired office, how to pray, and—most difficult of problems!—how to forgive. They were, and they remained, devout Jews; only to the current Judaism they added a recognition of Jesus as the Messiah, the observance of his precepts, and the expectation of his second coming to establish that Kingdom of God for which both Judaism and Christianity were waiting. During the lifetime of Jesus it all centered around the content of the message which he caught from the lips of his predecessor and with which he began his own work, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." His disciples were occupied with the Lord's parables and rules of conduct, with discovering surprising fulfilments of prophecy, and with discussing perplexing questions of apologetic which their new position forced upon them. Jesus had pointed to a spiritual essence in the Law underlying its ritual demands, and to a righteousness which exceeded that of the scribes and Pharisees; but their relation to the Law seems never to have been considered by his immediate disciples; it had to wait for its development in the next age by the great thinker of Christianity. As their faith grew after the crucifixion into primitive Christianity, the puzzle of their Master's death almost absorbed their grief for it, while the expectation of the Parousia became more vivid and exigent. When and how it would occur they knew not, only it would be soon, in their lifetime.

The synoptic conception, we may say then, is of Jesus of Nazareth, a historic being, whom the authors or others had seen and walked with in Galilee or Judea, whose words and deeds had

become of central importance, a man of such attractiveness that loyalty to him became a dominant power in those who drew near to him. They felt in him the authority of one who knew God and man at first hand and who dwelt with eternal things. Therefore he had originality; therefore he spoke boldly, and his word was with power. His confidence in his vision of God and in his success based on it were invincible; but together with this inflexibility of moral attitude there was a large loving-kindness which went out toward men, women, and little children, and all wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth.

I said that in the Second Gospel there is no touch of mystery; but that is not the case with the other two Synoptic Gospels. While they share in the main the comparatively incomplex view of Jesus, touches of mystery cannot be kept from creeping in. Apart from the mystery connected with a few of the miracles attributed to him, there are one or two utterances ascribed to him by Matthew and Luke which are widely different in tone from those practical directions for conduct and those deepened interpretations of duty and God which form the greater part of his recorded discourses. Notably there is Matt. 11:27, repeated in Luke 10:22: "All things are delivered unto me of my Father; and no man knoweth the Son but the Father, neither knoweth any man the Father but the Son, and he to whom the Son willeth to reveal him." That might have come not from the synoptists but from the Fourth Gospel, its tone is so like that profound underlying keynote of the Johannine writings, "I and my Father are one." In its distinct expression of the relation of Jesus to God this utterance stands almost alone in the synoptists; though we hear a somewhat similar note in the words ascribed by Matthew to Jesus in his final charge to his disciples, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth," and again in the passages, different in tone but tending in this direction, in which Jesus is described as the final judge of the world. In the picture of Jesus drawn by the synoptists, says Professor Ropes, "a certain mystery is an integral and essential element, which cannot be separated out as having been added by a legendary accretion."¹

¹ *The Apostolic Age*, p. 237.

There is another possible indication that this tone of mysticism was in the original words of Jesus and was not added by later writers. The Fourth Gospel declares that Jesus said, "I am the Way."¹ If that was in fact an utterance of his, it would be an exhibition of the spiritual Christ rather than the historic Jesus. Now this phrase, "the Way," came to be, in the apostolic age, according to the Book of the Acts, the common term for the Christian movement. Saul went to Damascus to see if he could arrest any belonging to "the Way."² "The Way" was opposed by the Jews in Ephesus.³ The procurator Felix was well posted with regard to "the Way."⁴ We find then the word with this signification in common use about the middle of the first century; but this usage seems to have disappeared, for we do not meet it afterward, and a half-century later "the Way" has come to be applied to Jesus himself as being the means of communication between man and God. This appears contrary to the regular order of logical development. We should expect that the use of the phrase as a name for Jesus would come first, and then it might naturally be applied to the movement inaugurated by him. The reverse process seems illogical—to take the name of a society and apply it to its founder. But if Jesus in fact uttered the words, the usage would be explained: the name which he gave himself came naturally to be used as that of his society. Either the Johannine usage was the first and that of the Acts second, which would be presumable, or that of the Acts was first and the Johannine second, which would be strange. It seems likely, therefore, that the Fourth Gospel is correct in attributing these words, "I am the Way," with their transcendent tone to Jesus.

This synoptic conception of Jesus, simple, though with threads of mystery interwoven in it, could not be adequate to meet the demands of inquiring intelligence or an expanding world. It must itself expand; and this, Jesus said, could be only through his departure. Then his followers would be compelled to think and act for themselves on the foundation he had built for them.

Shortly after his death there came an event, according to the Book of the Acts, which definitely changed the relation of the

¹ John 14:6.

³ Acts 19:9.

² Acts 9:2.

⁴ Acts 24:22.

disciples to their Master. On the day of Pentecost, somehow, in some way, they were seized with the conviction that he was not dead but alive. For some of them, no doubt, this implied merely the transference in imagination of his former material existence to a different, a heavenly sphere; but to those of deeper insight it was the discovery of what is meant by spiritual presence. Loving souls of all time have felt that when their minds are filled with a dear one who has gone, when they are living in the ways in which he lived, thinking his thoughts, holding his ideas, pressing heart to heart, they are thus communing not merely with the memory of him but with his spiritual presence; not with him as a ghostly *revenant*, but with those currents of his spiritual being which were of the essence of his true life. While this is not his corporeal presence, it is as truly, even more truly, his real presence. This conviction came to the disciples of Jesus on the day of Pentecost, and it changed the sphere in which their Master was present with them from an external to an internal one. It formed thus the transition from the synoptic conception of Jesus to that which was at the basis of the Pauline and Johannine conceptions.

Yet Paul seems to have received his conception of Jesus not from that of the synoptists but in another way. He has few sentences showing an influence of Jesus' language as reported in the Gospels. He says that he had formerly known Christ "after the flesh." It is possible for this to mean merely that he had seen Jesus and was acquainted with his history. This was probably the case; for it would have been strange for one who had been a student in Jerusalem, as Paul was at the time when the authorities were in conflict with Jesus, not to have seen him and known of the affair. But the phrase probably means that his conception of Jesus had been a superficial one, occupied with historic events and unaware of their profound bearing on the relations between man and God. Certainly he shows in his Epistles little interest in the history of Jesus before his redemptive death.¹ He insists

¹ The only events previous to the Last Supper to which he refers are the Davidic descent of Jesus (Rom. 1:3; 9:5; 15:12), his lowly condition and poverty (Phil. 2:7; II Cor. 8:9), his unselfishness (Rom. 15:3), possibly a part of the first charge to the twelve apostles (cf. I Cor. 9:14 with Matt. 10:10), and, if he is correctly reported by the author of the Acts, the preparatory ministry of John (Acts 13:24, 25), and one of Jesus' remarks not elsewhere preserved (Acts 20:35).

strongly that he borrowed his idea of Jesus from no one, but that it was wholly original: "I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man nor was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ."¹ It must, of course, have had some basis in historic events, but it seems to have diverged from the synoptic contemplation of the ministrations of Jesus to men and to have followed out rather the thought of his relation to God in redemption.

It is that word "redemption" which is the key to Paul's theology. When we try to trace the steps of his thought and assess them as rational, we are confronted by ideas which seem irrational and un-Christian. This is partly because he had still in mind conceptions belonging to Saul the Jew which Paul the Christian had not outgrown, and partly because we are enjoying the fruitage of larger Christian conceptions, of which he was sowing the seeds unawares; but his view of the process of redemption, however explained, we shall find based on the great fundamental laws of man's spiritual life which are as true for us as they have been in all time.

The most earnest endeavor of Saul, the young Pharisee, was to be right—"justified" he called it—in the sight of God, and this of course could be only by keeping the Law. The more he tried, however, the more impossible it became. Suddenly it flashed upon him, What if this infinity of minute demands did not exist? What if they were to be met in another way? What if they had been met? If they had, then he was free from them. In the same instantaneous flash came the conviction that Jesus, whom he had fought against, was the Messiah. But he, the anointed one, God's own Son, was of course above the Law and free from it, though he had gained this freedom while experiencing human conditions. Paul puts in a single word the key to Christ's exaltation and hangs it up on a "Wherefore"; for after enumerating the lowly conditions through which Jesus triumphantly passed he says, "*Wherefore* God hath highly exalted him."² Now if he, Paul, should pass through the same experiences, he would attain

¹ Gal. 1:11, 12, 16, 22.

² Phil. 2:9.

the same blessed result; and this, if Jesus became his Master, he could do, for then, following the steps of his Lord with loving devotion, he would become one with him; he too would be baptized with consecration to God, he would die to sin, and this would mean that he too would ascend and rise into newness of life. Becoming thus joined to Christ by passing through his experiences, he would share his fortunes hereafter. Again he puts his keynote into a word or two. If God commended his love to us through the death of Christ while we were sinners, much more shall we be saved now that we are justified; if the death of Christ brought us near to God, much more shall we be saved by his life. There is many a trembling soul that has laid itself down with Paul in confidence upon his "much more."

There was, however, another side to the transaction. How could he, how could even Christ, obtain freedom from demands which were just? How was it possible for God to lay aside these demands? The debt incurred through sin must be paid. How could God with justice give free way to his forgiving love? But again Paul's answer came: It was through the death of Christ. He nowhere traces completely the connection which he finds between Christ's death and the possibility of God's forgiveness, but he assumes and reiterates it. The Cross was an offering on the part of Christ, on the part of humanity which he represented, which made free forgiveness possible.

Here many a thoughtful Christian has stumbled and parted company with Paul; for the conception which seems to underlie the apostle's thought, of sin as a debt for which a vindictive God must exact the uttermost farthing of payment, is abhorrent to him and contrary, as he must believe, to the conception of God as set forth by Jesus Christ. Viewing Paul's thought thus, we may see in it only a remnant of Judaism and even of paganism—a savage deity refusing to be appeased except by a bloody sacrifice. Yet we may pierce deeper, and, without asserting that our explanation is precisely that of Paul, we may trace the law of redemption until it leads us to the Cross of Christ; for redemption inevitably involves suffering, and it was foreseen long before the Christian Era that suffering for righteousness has a saving power

not only for the sufferer but for all who come within the range of its influence. The Prophet of the Exile had declared of the servant of the Lord, "Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. The chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed."¹ Of the Maccabean martyrs it was said, "They became, as it were, a vicarious expiation for the sins of the nation, and through the blood of those godly men and their atoning death Divine Providence saved afflicted Israel."² We do not have to turn to the Scripture for evidence of the vicarious and redeeming power of suffering, for it is intelligible to everyone who has tried to rescue from sin one whom he loves. He has found himself plunged by love into all the fortunes of the sinner; himself, though innocent, suffering punishment with and for the guilty. He knows that this fellow-suffering constitutes the most potent appeal and the ultimate agency for the salvation of the sinner, and he gladly pours out his life-force, his life-blood, as a ransom.

The power which uplifts the world is will for righteousness. This may be viewed as a great fund supplied not only by the will of God but by contributions from the wills of individual men. The more of such contributions there are, the greater is the power in the hands of God available for the establishment of the kingdom of righteousness. So too, we may believe, there is a fund of suffering necessary for the world's redemption. Every act of suffering in a good cause, insignificant though it may seem, is not lost but goes to swell that fund, making it more potent for the world's redemption. The existence of such a fund is not demonstrable, but belief in it is an imperative demand of the soul, and evidence for it is eagerly and hopefully sought by every sufferer, who would endure with proud satisfaction if only his agonized question could be convincingly answered, "What profit is there in my blood if I go down into the pit?"

The conception of such a fund, potent for redemption, may throw light on the position Paul assigns to the Cross of Christ as being at once the means of drawing the sinner to God and therefore of making it possible for God to come close to the sinner.

¹ Isa. 53:4, 5.

² IV Macc. 17:22.

Salvation, to be complete, must secure deliverance from the guilt of sin and from its power. The guilt of sin, its opposition to God's law, ceases when the opposition ceases, though even then the punitive consequences of past sins may remain. The power of sin is broken and the man kept from falling when he is uplifted through shame and love into fellowship with the redeeming agency. Being cleansed thus from the guilt of sin and from its power, he becomes at one with God.

We are inclined to suppose that the work of Christ in establishing an atonement has its effect wholly upon men. What need is there, we ask, of propitiating God, of urging him to be willing to pardon and receive sinners? He is more than willing already. It is not God who needs to be reconciled to men, but men to be reconciled to God; the work of Christ can have effect upon men only. Yet rather, we should say, upon men primarily; for while it is true that God stands ready to welcome and receive every sinner who repents, yet he is kept at a distance by an unrepentant and opposing will, and is able then to impart not so much himself as certain of his benefactions only—such sun and rain as just and unjust can receive alike. When, however, the sinner's attitude is changed, by that fact God's attitude too is changed, and it becomes possible for his love to flow out unhampered by human barriers. Christ's work then, while having its primary result in bringing men to God, has as a secondary result the bringing of God to men. What it changes is not the nature of God's heart but the conditions under which alone that loving heart can manifest its nature; for no righteous will can act or feel toward an evil will in the same way as toward a good one. There is more than a figure of speech in Paul's term "wrath," taken from the Old Testament, for the attitude of God to sin. Until one repents, forgiveness must be incomplete. It is only when forgiveness meets repentance that it can have its longed-for completeness; only then that the sinner can be free from "wrath" and be—in Paul's phraseology—"justified"; and such change is possible only through that firm hold on eternal realities which Paul calls faith; through the recognition of Jesus as the representative of God and a passionate loyalty to Christ, who now becomes the motive power of the soul.

The transformation of the believer's moral nature alters not only the status of the soul in its relation to God but the relation of God to the soul.

This may help to an understanding of those phrases which are likely to give offense to modern readers of the Pauline theology, phrases such as "propitiation," Christ a "sacrifice to God," "being made a curse for us," "redemption through the blood of Christ." Such expressions seem to point not only to a change in the attitude of God to men but to unworthy motives for the change. Undoubtedly such phrases take their form more naturally in a mind brought up, as was that of Paul, in a system in which bloody sacrifices formed an essential part; but these expressions are only the casual clothing of his profound thought, and even with him such figures of speech are much less frequent than we are inclined to suppose, while his main emphasis is on the effect of Christ's redeeming work upon men.

The Renaissance of the fifteenth century was grounded upon the assertion of the rights and the worth of the individual. Paul may be said to be in this respect the prophet of the Renaissance; for in his view religion is not involved with membership in a nation, much less in a church, nor in case of the individual is it a product of heredity and education, but it is essentially a response of the soul to God. Luther called attention to the pronouns of the Bible. It is not "God will save men" but "I will save thee." This feeling of a direct and intimate relation between God and man turns Paul's gaze within and fixes his eyes upon the processes of development going on in the individual soul; and it is this that colors his use of the term "Christ." I said that he shows little interest in the events of the life of Jesus; but his pages are studded with the name "Christ"; it flashes upon us, directly or indirectly, from almost every thought. It has passed with him, however, from a title of Jesus of Nazareth to a designation of the ideal man, the embodiment of all that is best in humanity, the expression of the possibilities of the soul of the individual and of the race. "Christ" stands with him for the human side of God and therefore for the divine side of humanity. He uses the phrase "Son of God" infrequently and "Son of Man" not at all; but they

are both combined for him in the word "Christ." For example, he says that God's dear Son is "the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature."¹ Again, he longs to attain the resurrection of the dead, which, he says, he has not already attained—a remark which would be superfluous if resurrection meant to him a re-endowment of life in a future state. But he will attain this, or, as he more fully defines it, he will become perfect, if he may "know Christ"; not merely the facts of his sufferings, death, and resurrection, which he already knew, but the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings and the likeness of his death. If these same processes take place in him—and of course he thinks of himself as a type of every man—they will constitute in him the ideal for which he is apprehended. He will then be "in Christ."²

The Christian idea of God is adjusted to two foci, his transcendence and his immanence, and it fails in reality and power wherever either of these is feeble. Paul carries on this thought and points out as a corollary of this spiritual ellipse the transcendence of Christ and his immanence in the soul; for in saying that Paul had little interest in Jesus as a historic being, but that "Christ" was to him the expression of the divine side of humanity and of the human side of God, I am by no means implying that he was not also to Paul a real person of history. Passages constantly occur in which the word "Christ" has a direct reference to events in Jesus' life. Now one and now another of the great conceptions which go to make up his idea of Christ is prominent and gives accent to the special thought in hand. Christ is made of the seed of David and is also the shining image of God.³ Now it is that Jesus who was the complete embodiment of God under human conditions, now it is the spiritual processes in himself, in every man, which produce and constitute the lofty ideal of humanity; now Christ is external to the soul, the giver of all its true life, now he is within the soul, its very life and essence. From one to another of these great conceptions his expression hurries, as it is now this, now that aspect that he has mainly in view, though he never quite forgets any one of them. They tangle

¹ Col. 1:15.

² Phil. 3:10-13.

³ Col. 1:15.

his thought into inextricable sentences. They reveal to us conceptions which are widely illuminative, those ordinary-seeming phrases—"in Christ," "to whom coming," "Christ in you"—conceptions as to the inclusiveness of personality. The mystery of the mingling of human and divine in the soul and in the race so overcomes him that he bursts out into poetry and a torrent of prepositions: "For of him and through him and to him are all things; to whom be glory forever. Amen."

When we turn to the Johannine conception of Christ the date of the Fourth Gospel becomes of interest. It is not, however, necessary for us to attempt to fix this exactly, for what we desire to consider is not the genuineness of the Gospel but the authenticity of its conception of Christ and the relation of this to the synoptic and Pauline conceptions. It is enough for this purpose to have permission from scholars to place the date of the Gospel a half-century at least after the last of the Pauline Epistles. During this time the church had been obeying the prophet's injunction to lengthen its cords and strengthen its stakes, and consequently, as the prophet had foretold, it was inheriting the Gentiles. Especially had it strengthened its hold on Asia Minor. The churches which Paul had founded there in his journeyings had been keeping alive the light of his gospel, so that a quarter or a half-century after their foundation a writer could speak of them as seven golden candlesticks, which were the dwelling-place of Christ.¹ It is a tradition which has strong evidence for its genuineness that the apostle John lived until near the end of the century in Ephesus, and that he was the author of the Fourth Gospel and of the First Epistle of John. Whether this was the case or not, it is unquestionable that there lived in that part of the world in the last quarter of the century a writer of spiritual insight and imagination who had himself known Jesus, or had been well acquainted with one who had such intimate personal knowledge, who also was indebted to Paul's gospel, as he came on it in Asia Minor, but whose view of Christ was a direct development neither of that of Paul nor of that of the synoptists. We may for convenience refer to this writer as "John," without assuming that he was in fact the apostle.

¹ Rev. 1:12, 13.

The synoptic conception of Christ has already been described as simple of thought, not analytic, not theologic. On the other hand, the tone of the Fourth Gospel is mature, meditative, mystical. The life it reflects is subtle and complex. It is full of theology. Its gaze is dreamy, far distant, so far that on its horizon the line between earth and heaven is indistinguishable. The Synoptic Gospels are full of brief, epigrammatic sayings of Jesus, and of stories of his illustrating the Kingdom of God. The Fourth Gospel, with one possible exception, contains no parable, and the discourses of Jesus in it are involved in style and are occupied with setting forth the relations of men to him and his relations to his Father. The synoptists represent the bread and wine of the Last Supper as symbolic of Jesus' body and blood. The Fourth Gospel knows nothing of this sacrament. The synoptists and the Fourth Gospel are not merely different but are in some respects contradictory. In the latter there is no development in the history of Jesus' public ministry. His messiahship is at once announced by John the Baptist, recognized by the disciples, and exhibited to the multitudes assembled at Jerusalem. On the other hand, in the Synoptic Gospels his messianic character is unfolded only gradually. Those who discover it are bidden to keep it concealed. His closest disciples are slow to recognize it, and it is openly announced only at the close of his career. Again, the character of the life is different which the followers of Christ will share through their connection with him. In the first three Gospels it is a blessed existence in some distant sphere in the future. The present is only preparatory to it, for this life will pass away before the Kingdom of Heaven will begin. In the Fourth Gospel the reward of the followers of Christ is eternal life; and this is conceived not so much as waiting upon a future day as a matter of here and now, for it consists in union of spirit with him. The Christ of Luke places the resurrection and the moral assessment of life far distant at the world's end. John makes the Christ repudiate this view and declare that he is himself the resurrection and the life, and that belief in him carries life with it immediately.

Such differences and contrarieties must spring from a difference of view in the writers. They must have regarded Jesus differently

and have had different aims in writing. In the case of the author of the Fourth Gospel we cannot but suspect before we reach the end of his book that he has a special purpose; and when we reach the last chapter but one we find it definitely stated: "These things are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his name."¹ The author's work then is not a biography of Jesus, not a history of the events of his time, but aims to demonstrate that Jesus was the Messiah and the Son of God, and this not so much for intellectual conviction as for spiritual edification. He alone speculates on the relation of Jesus to the Almighty Creator. He alone sees in him the representative in human conditions of a side of God's nature which forever existed. The synoptists exhibit Jesus as preaching the truth; the fourth evangelist regards Jesus as being himself the Truth, the eternal Thought and Reasonableness of God. It is not merely the case with him, as with the others, that following Christ's precepts will result in a life which exemplifies that of Jesus; but with him Jesus is life itself, all that gives wealth, joy, and worth to existence. Christ is not only an objective, historic being who once lived and died, but he is the subjective principle of life within the soul. The first and third evangelists give traditions of the birth of Jesus, though even they ignore them afterward and sometimes contradict them. The second evangelist hears the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ in the voice of John the Baptist. But the fourth evangelist could have nothing to do with traditions of the birth of Jesus, for to him the history of Christ went back through the ages and began in the beginning with God.

When we have apprehended how widely different is the portrait of Jesus which is given in the Fourth Gospel from that of the other three, we hastily turn and ask, "Is it authentic? How far does it represent the real Jesus of Nazareth, or how far is it owing to the peculiarities of the author, whoever he was?" The brief, pithy sentences and vital metaphors which the earlier Gospels ascribe to Jesus all bear one sharp and individual stamp; but these are

¹ John 20:31.

widely different from the close involutions of argument of the Fourth Gospel and the intricacies of metaphysical thought underlying them. What is true of historic data and of style may be also true in some respects of the underlying theology, for it is partly conditioned by them. Was this theologic view of Jesus a peculiarity of the author, or was Jesus in reality the mystic being here portrayed? This special tinge which the Fourth Gospel has throughout, is that the artist's coloring, or is the portrait trustworthy?

Portrait—that is the word we must keep in mind in considering this Gospel. It is not a photograph of Jesus. How do a portrait and a photograph differ? The one gives the fact of the moment and from one point of view. Place yourself at the camera and put your sitter in position, and the photograph is precisely what you see. It is the scientifically correct record of these particular conditions; but as a complete report of a man it may be gravely inaccurate. "He never takes well," we say of this or that person, "his face has so much expression." Where a subject is complex the photograph, by recording only one aspect, may convey an absolutely false impression; but the portrait-painter endeavors to show the full, the real man. The greatness of a Rembrandt or a Watts portrait does not lie in the fact that it tells us of what color the subject's eyes were or what kind of a coat he wore. We care little whether the artist was historically accurate in these details or not; but we stand in amazement at seeing a human soul gazing at us from the canvas—a soul calm or frivolous, humorous, vain, or profound. It is the man himself that we see; not his clothes, not his appearance at one time or under special circumstances, but the composite, complete man. Before the artist can create his likeness he must create *him*. The sitter presents himself before the artist's judgment seat, and the artist gives sentence upon him with every stroke of his brush: "Your character is thus and so. You are a coward here, a hero there. Thus I strip off all accidentals of time and circumstances, and behold, your real self stands revealed." It must require much confidence to have one's portrait painted by a great artist.

It is such a likeness of Christ that the Fourth Gospel gives us. Mark, with his loving eye for details, records this and that circumstance which we welcome as furnishing the fact-basis for our conception of Jesus; and then comes John, and upon this background he paints so that we behold the light of the knowledge of the glory of God beaming forth in the face of Jesus Christ. It is a presumption in behalf of the accuracy of his portrait that it is not a summary of facts but the impression which Christ made as a whole upon an artist of constructive imagination and profound spiritual insight. If we had possessed no more than the first three Gospels we should have had a wonderful Jesus, an example and an inspiration; but he would have been a historic being only; we should have had no warrant for identifying him with the divine life of our souls, dwelling with us and abiding in us. The Christ of the Fourth Gospel, however, is the connecting link between the outward and the inward, between the historic and the spiritual. He is the representative in bodily conditions, in terms of time and space, of that human side which existed forever in the nature of God. The life of Jesus was in time; but the divine sonship, the existence in God of a human side, was independent of time and humanity, being eternal. This was authentically exhibited in Jesus of Nazareth. Not that he is himself the Almighty; for neither in this Gospel nor elsewhere in the New Testament is it asserted as a theological proposition that Jesus is God. The Christians of the first two centuries considered that they might call Jesus *κύριος*, and let their feelings go out toward him as toward God, without being driven to justify their feeling by making the advance in thought regarded as necessary by the Christians of the fourth century. To the Christians of the apostolic age Jesus was the authentic representative of God. If God had lived, a man on earth, he would have done just as Jesus did. Jesus showed thought and love and goodness as existing forever in the bosom of the Father and constituting in him the ground of connection with humanity; and, on the other hand, he showed this same goodness and thought and love as the true nature of men and constituting in them the ground of union with God. He brought God down to men, and raised men up to God;

and as he is God's representative, so whatsoever things are true, pure, just, lovely, these are his representatives. The soul of the world, all the calls to noble desire, all that makes life worth living, this is the presence of the spirit of Christ. It is such a conception of Jesus as this that is the characteristic gift to us of the Fourth Gospel.

When we compare the Johannine conception of Jesus with that of Paul we note two striking resemblances: the pre-existence of Christ is strongly emphasized by both, and the real and actual oneness of the believer with Christ. In the synoptists these conceptions are lacking, though there are a few utterances ascribed to Jesus which may be regarded as germs of the thought which later developed into the idea that the spiritual life of the believer is the life of God in the soul.¹ The Fourth Gospel and the First Epistle of John undoubtedly originated in Asia and have an Asiatic background. It seems probable, however, that this background was not a direct borrowing or development of Paul's theology but was in part an original and parallel system of thought and in part an indirect inheritance of Paulinism; for while the two systems contain, as has been pointed out, striking resemblances, they also contain marked differences.

For example, Paul's chief interest is in the death and resurrection of Jesus, and in these as securing the redemption of the believer through his oneness with Christ; but to John the death of Christ is not so much a ransom from sin as a manifestation of the love of God drawing men to him. That escape from under the power of sin which filled so large a part in Paul's thought has with John passed over into the conviction that to know God is the highest good. What redemption was in Paul's system, revelation is in John's. For Paul, at least in his middle period of thought, Christ's resurrection consisted in his dying unto the flesh and rising again in the spirit; John regards Christ's resurrection as having been in the flesh, for after it the prints of his wounds still remain, and he eats with his disciples. Strangely enough, however, the resurrection of the believer is for John a spiritual one, or rather it is not so much a resurrection as the

¹ Matt. 10:20; 13:11; 16:17; 19:26, and parallel passages.

possession of eternal life here and now. Belief in Christ, the knowledge of God, these constitute life eternal and therefore carry the believer through death. The saving power which Paul ascribed to Jesus in his exalted post-resurrection existence only, John gives to Jesus during his lifetime on earth; and this is not a mere difference with regard to time, but marks a different view as to the relation of the Christian to his Lord. Such an insistence on the life-giving power of the historic Jesus could hardly have come except from one who had had personal knowledge of him or had learned of him from one of his own disciples. In spite of the victory which Paul had gained in combating the view that Jewish religion consisted in doing the works of the Law, there still remained stamped on Christianity a certain legal form; and this appears in John's assertion that the Christian life consists in keeping Christ's commandments. This is somewhat inconsistent with his profound conviction that it is the indwelling Christ who makes life divine. Both these stages are of course needful to the Christian; but while the former is, as it were, the body of Christianity, the latter is the very spirit and soul of it.

In both the Pauline and the Johannine conceptions of Christ I have pointed out a certain mystical element—the immanence of Christ in the soul and the dwelling of the soul in him. And we have seen that while this is absent from the synoptic conception in any direct form, there are utterances there ascribed to Jesus which may be regarded as the germs of this profound thought; but it is not upon these only that the evidence rests for the authenticity of the later conception, for the picture we gain of Jesus Christ in the Gospel of John is in its most important elements similar to that which we have in the Synoptic Gospels. That he was to both John and Paul a spiritual being renders it none the less true that he was to them, as to the synoptists, a historic being; and the appearance in different minds in widely different localities of this mystical element in the figure of Christ makes it probable that it had a basis in Jesus himself. The fact that John does not hesitate to assign to Jesus human limitations and weaknesses shows that in ascribing divinity to him he must have had authoritative warrant in his words or character; for otherwise he would

not have ventured to include in his portrait features which might seem inconsistent with its main aim.¹ In the fragments of a lost Gospel discovered at Oxyrhynchus in 1897 this mystical tone is found in the words Jesus is said to have uttered: "Jesus saith, Wherever there are two, they are not without God, and wherever there is one alone, I say, I am with him. Raise the stone, and there thou shalt find me; cleave the wood, and there am I." The fact that this tone is found in localities so widely separated as Egypt and Ephesus makes it probable that it was not invented by post-apostolic writers but was part of the original tradition and had a historic basis.

Belief in God depends more upon moral than upon intellectual grounds. It is founded upon the insistence of the soul that the highest intellectual and moral ideal shall be real. The cogency of this demand will therefore be in proportion to the urgency with which the moral pressure is felt; so belief in the authenticity of the idea of Christ as immanent in the soul, which underlies both the Pauline and the Johannine conceptions, will depend largely upon whether such an idea is demanded by one's spiritual nature. To some the figure which appears in the synoptists may be a sufficient explanation of the person of Christ and of the way of their own approach to God. Others, to whom it seems that there must of necessity have been from all eternity a human side in God, that this must of necessity have become at some time embodied as completely as is possible under human conditions, that this ideal must stand in vital connection with the life of their own souls today—such will recognize in the portrait of Christ drawn by Paul and John with the purpose of presenting to the soul its Master, features intrinsically probable as those of the historic Jesus of Nazareth and essential to the Savior of the world.

¹ Cf. John 4:6; 5:19, 30; 7:1; 11:33 ff.; 12:27, 49.